



EXHIBIT 12
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HB

January 19, 2011

Good morning, Chairman Roberts and members to the Health and Human Services subcommittee, my name is Dennis Taylor. I am the policy coordinator for the Montana Children's Initiative (MCI), a provider organization providing children's mental health services, shelter care and foster parent services in virtually every county in the state of Montana.

MCI supports the Children's Mental Health Bureau program and budget as presented to you in the Executive Budget . . . as far as it goes.

MCI supports continuation of a fully integrated statewide system of care with an appropriate array of services that allows custom made treatment plans that meet individual issues and needs. Our mental health system for children and families needs well-funded community based providers, important and simple rules that protect consumers but allows creativity and efficiency, integrated systems that moves smoothly for the child and their family between mental health, youth courts, child protection and the schools.

MCI believes services for children's mental health must incentivize community-based services rather than higher end closed placements and give priority to maintaining or reconnecting families. This demands a partnership between DPHHS, MCI providers and families where each assists the other in meeting our goals.

We can not do that without a continued policy commitment to maintain and improve lagging provider reimbursement rates. The Governor's proposed budget calls for a 2% roll back in provider reimbursement rates to 2009 levels and the continuation of a freeze on provider rates for three full years. This three year freeze in provider rates will have a devastating effect on the quality and the continuity of children's mental health services all across the state and threatens the very survival of some of the very smallest of our community based service providers.

Local community based providers represent the primary tool for state government to meet federal and state statutory obligations to serve the people of Montana (especially our young people and their families.) Providers should be treated fairly in paying for children's mental health services and, at the very least, on parity with those who sell cars and paper to the government.

We urge the subcommittee to return provider reimbursement rates to the 2010 level and to add 1% in 2012 and 3% in 2013 to ensure that provider rates at least keep up with rising costs of providing services.

In Montana, we are well on our way to meeting our goals to keep children safe, help them recover, remain with their families, stay in their communities and grow up to become productive citizens. We urge your support for the Children's Mental Health Bureau budget and the continuation of our partnership to provide high quality services to some of the most vulnerable children with serious emotional disturbances (SED) and their families in our state.

Thank you for the support that you have given to children's mental health services over the years, for the fair hearing you always give our proposals, for the opportunity to speak to you today and for all the hard work you do on our behalf.

Mr. Chairman and member of the subcommittee, **the Montana Children's Initiative (MCI) supports the Executive Budget recommendations for the children's mental health program and asks for your support and partnership to ensure the necessary funds to maintain our current system of care without further erosion.**

Thank you.



Montana Children's Initiative Provider Association 2011 Legislative Session Agenda

Mission: Working together for an effective efficient system that cares.

Montana Children's Initiative Members

Acadia Montana, Butte
Bitterroot Valley Educational Co-op, Stevensville
Billings Clinic Psychiatric Services, Billings
Excel, Inc., Billings
Florence Crittenton Home & Services, Helena
Intermountain, Helena & Kalispell
Kairos Youth Services, Great Falls
Montana Youth Home RMDC, Helena
Montana State Foster/Adoptive Parent Association
Montana Community Services Inc., Billings
New Day, Billings
Partnership for Children, Missoula
Watson Children's Shelter, Missoula
Western Montana Mental Health Center, Missoula, Kalispell, Butte & Bozeman
Yellowstone Boys & Girls Ranch, Billings
Youth Homes, Missoula
Youth Dynamics, Billings, Helena & Kalispell

MCI Legislative Priorities

1. Support increased provider rates and budgets for child welfare, juvenile justice and children's mental health serves.
2. Support continuation and strengthening the DPHHS Rate Commission.
3. Advocate for an initiative or study to address needs of children transitioning/aging out of services.
4. Expand Medicaid coverage for children aging out of foster care to 21 years of age.
5. Expand Healthy Montana Kids mental health benefit package.